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## JAPANESE FOLK BELIEFS AND PRACTICES, TULE LAKE, CALIFORNIA

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OF ALL THE PRODUCTS OF JAPANESE CULTURE, the folkloristic aspects are perhaps the most neglected in the literature.<sup>1</sup> From 1943 to 1946, as Community Analyst at Tule Lake, California, the author had occasion to note the rich diversity of such beliefs and practices, and the manner in which they were derived from post-Meiji Japan or even earlier historical levels. What was more interesting, however, was their revival as part of a total nativistic reaction from 1944 to 1946, and their equally sudden decline in importance after 1946, once the conditions of Tule Lake Center existence were removed. The Tulean Japanese, who unwittingly provided this laboratory experiment in the rise and fall of folkloristic elements, were, in all, 25,000 persons, 19,000 of whom resided in the Segregation Center for its three-year period of duration. The other group, an additional 6,000, left late in 1943 from the then-Relocation Center and cannot be said to have shared in any major folkloristic revival and subsequent decline. We were able to recheck<sup>2</sup> these data during the period 1946-1949, outside Center confines, and what is more significant, with original informants and former research staff assistance.<sup>3</sup> This subsequent check revealed that the folkloristic beliefs and practices had again largely vanished—that the revival was over once

<sup>1</sup> Basil Hall Chamberlain's *Things Japanese*, while excellent in philological matters, appears on closer scrutiny to be untrustworthy when accounting for peasant customs. John Embree's *Japanese Peasant Songs* (MAFS, Vol. 38) goes far to fill the gap, and his *Suye Mura* and *Japanese Nation*, though concentrating on other facets, still contain our best references. But beyond this, there is little from trained hands. Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, despite the author's long-standing interest in folklore, and Gorer's "Themes in Japanese Culture" (*Transactions*, New York Academy of Sciences, Series II, V, No. 5, 1943, pp. 106-124), despite its all-inclusive theoretic stand, give only a passing nod to such materials. LaBarre, who has published interestingly on "Folklore and Psychology" (*JAF*, 1948) in these pages, and in several other places on his construct of Oriental character structure, has nowhere strongly introduced such data.

<sup>2</sup> Research in 1946 and 1949 (summer) was made possible by the Social Science Research Council through an Award and Grant-in-Aid. In this period, also, the point of Tule Lake being a Center marked by nativistic cultural revivalism was being fought through the Courts, resulting in a recent decision to restore American citizenship to approximately 4,000 American Nisei. Anthropologists may note the Court's wisdom in recognizing Tulean cultural revivalism.

<sup>3</sup> At Tule, a staff of sixteen Research Assistants, Issei, Nisei and Kibei, were at all times utilized. They have since been invaluable aids.

the American scene was substituted for the Center. What had happened in the revivalistic episode could only be dimly recollected by a handful of people, and where credulity had once reigned, there were now practically no believers.

These points, if demonstrated repeatedly, have we think, considerable theoretic significance. It is not simply, as LaBarre has shown in the essay on "Folklore and Psychology" above noted, that folklore and religious symbolisms are part of the "projective system" of a culture. They are that, and the point is well taken—as a first step. But the real question of importance is from where do the projective systems of a culture derive? Are psychological phenomena of *cultural* significance always group, or social psychological, phenomena? Are not psychological tensions, to be rated culturally operative, the shared and group-experienced tensions?<sup>4</sup> Is not the obvious distinction Sapir made, over a decade ago, between an individually-oriented clinical psychology and a group-oriented social psychology, still valid?<sup>5</sup>

For anthropologists who have held that culture is a thing *sui generis* (and such diverse and vigorous thinkers as Lowie, Kroeber and White might be mentioned in this connection), a part of the proof might well be whether parts of culture undergo change, and illustrate dynamisms, apart from the identity of the specific culture-carriers. At Tule Lake, this would seem to be the case. Folkloristic elements were revived and at points intensified beyond anything characteristic of the post-Meiji Japan from which they stemmed. The culture-carriers were, of course, the chief actors in the Center drama, and the psychological temper of the Center was reflected by them. While the group psychology was far from a negligible factor, it stemmed from the cultural conditions of Center existence. The same individuals, outside, repudiated the beliefs and practices found congenial for a time. Viewed historically, parts of culture had been revived—groups indeed reviving them—but the same individual carriers later were quite willing to let folkloristic elements fall into desuetude. The example is instructive for social psychology and anthropology alike, and it suggests that once we have passed the Boasian point of recognizing that culture complexes can change (sometimes independently of one another), we may then proceed to discover what to some is obvious, namely that individuals draw their sustenance from culture and the conditions under which it operates. In a cultural sense, folklore forms and dies independently of the identity of specific culture-carriers.

Linton, in his work on "Nativistic Movements," has distinguished, in one set of categories, between perpetuative-magical movements and revivalistic-magical ones.<sup>6</sup> The former are invoked in a drive toward cultural integration where anxieties or other projectively-expressed mechanisms of a shared, group nature may be present, but where dislocating shocks and threats to the

<sup>4</sup> M. K. Opler, "Psychoanalytic Techniques in Social Analysis," *Journal of Social Psychology*, 15 (1942), 91-127, answers this question affirmatively from the point of view of theoretical and factual analysis.

<sup>5</sup> E. Sapir, "The Contribution of Psychiatry to an Understanding of Behavior in Society," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 42, No. 6, (1937), 862-870.

<sup>6</sup> R. Linton, "Nativistic Movements," *American Anthropologist*, 45 (1943), 230-240.

cultural standards are at a minimum. Here culture is perpetuating itself with magical devices—ritual and folkloristic beliefs *inter alia*. In the latter movements, however, "revival is part of a magical formula designed to modify the society's environment in ways which will be favorable to it," and so takes more intense forms. The ritualistic formula, we may add, with its action program and clear outlets for energy, may differ at points from the milder folkloristic one. But Linton's categories describe quite well the manner in which folk beliefs and practices may grow, in a community under stress, from perpetuative-magical forms to revivalistic-magical ones. So it was at Tule Lake. Folklore which had been remembered by a handful of Issei, and perpetuated in a small circle, was seized upon by Issei and Nisei alike in a broadening sphere when it was deemed important to strike back at administrative pressures, programs, and policies with the dignified weapons of Japanese culture.

In our earlier paper on the revival of Senryu poetry at Tule Lake, we were able to show how shared, group psychological tensions among Issei and Kibei increasingly took expression, often escapist, in this particular folk form.<sup>7</sup> What marked the Segregation Center over the three-year period of its isolated existence was the growing intensity of all its cultural revivalisms, its Messianic movements, and its various solutions to strain and stress. The credulity with which irrational belief came to be accepted, even by Nisei, was an inevitable result of this total process. One form of such belief was unsubstantiated rumor; another, folk beliefs and practices. Tule Lake became a place to study Japanese culture, not in the Malinowskian sense of static, functional integration, but in the dynamic sense of a people under stress, and culture as an inexorably imposed set of solutions. The following selection of folk beliefs and practices is therefore presented (1) as a sample of Japanese folk belief and practice, peasant style; (2) as a demonstration of our thesis that cultural elements can be revived and utilized, even by highly Americanized Nisei, irrespective of the specific identity of the culture carriers; and (3) as a case history of folkloristic revival from perpetuative to revivalistic forms.

#### I. THE BALL OF FIRE

A ball of fire is literally *hidama*, "fireball." Embree also mentions the related notion of *hitodama*, a fluorescent-like light representing the human soul.<sup>8</sup> *Hidama*, in the Japanese countryside, may be rice, which, when treated with disrespect—as in careless burning—becomes a fireball and whirls out of the house. Thereafter, it is a bad omen, as is the *hitodama* connected with human spirits.

At Tule Lake, Kumamoto-ken informants gave versions agreeing with both bad luck omens. After 1944, burnt rice became a thing to conjure with and certain messhalls were regarded, along with their chefs, as being productive of ill luck. In this period, however, there was considerably more em-

<sup>7</sup> M. K. Opler and F. Obayashi, "Senryu Poetry as Folk and Community Expression," *JAF*, 58 (1945), 1-11.

<sup>8</sup> J. F. Embree, *Suye Mura*, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

phasis on ghosts as omens of death. The genitive form, *hinotama*, was most prevalent in stories, and could be taken to mean "ghost, seen as a ball of fire, presaging death." Nisei who had hitherto not known of *hinotama* either saw *hinotama* or passed on stories. The presence of an inter-generation conflict between Nisei and their Issei parents was no small factor in giving wing to rumor and currency to stories of impending death for block residents, but the same Nisei disbelieved such stories later, outside the Center, and had, by then, ceased seeing fireballs.

In the Center, Issei particularly held that a fireball might appear *after* the death of an individual, rather than before, and their emphasis on "ghost," pure and simple, without impending death for a Center resident, is understandable in view of the growing prevalence of Nisei stories and visions. As Center difficulties increased, the Nisei came to regard the crematory ("graveyard") area as especially dangerous, and around the time of citizenship renunciation—a most tempestuous period in the Center—we noted all people, old and young, for the first time in camp history, making a wide arc around these buildings.

Typical versions include:

"There are ghosts seen over there, *hinotama*. Greenish lights, they say, bigger than a fist. Last winter, I heard only one story of light coming out of the camp smoke above the field on a foggy morning, but now all sorts of stories are going around. We wouldn't go near too early in the morning or at night around that barrack. It's the worst place."

"They say you can see them over the blocks, too. As you say, some might see glow from the block boiler rooms. But X6 said the color was different and it bobbed around near the ground before he could get inside his apartment."<sup>9</sup>

"A young girl, D4, was walking back to her apartment in Block 32 . . . when something prompted her to look over her shoulder. She glanced up and was chilled by a strange glow hovering over the latrine roof. She shivered violently and hurried home to tell her mother, fully expecting her not to believe it. But her mother looked worried, opens the door, looks out, but says nothing. The girl insisted on knowing what it was and her mother told her she must have seen *hinotama*. A few days later an elderly bedridden block resident died."

"My mother-in-law lived in a block where *hinotama* was seen. Funny thing, she was just curious about it at first. Guess that was because in our former Center, Poston, about everyone heard stories of *hinotama* seen in Camp 2 around the time of the trouble. But when everyone got talking, she took it seriously."

"B2 told an actual experience from her childhood in Japan. She had some chore in the garden and saw a tiny ball of fire over some flowerpots, about the size of a melon with a half-green, half-orange glow. She got only a backward glimpse as she rushed back to the house even before screams could form in her throat. At the back door she remembered with unexpected clearness that if you take off your *geta* and turn them upside down, you'll see the face of the person about to die on the back of them. She had no time, though. She just rushed to her bed—still out—and heard her sister ask what's wrong from beneath her comforter. She couldn't answer or even talk until next morning, and that day a neighbor died."

<sup>9</sup> Names are suppressed for obvious reasons, but are present in many original accounts.



"The results for my Ward show that just about everybody refers to *hinotama* now. They didn't two years ago. It's all over the place, and if I don't keep my wits about me, I'll be seeing them too." (Staff Member, at Staff conference, December, 1945.)

Outside Center confines, in 1946-1949, we checked these beliefs again, using the same informants. We found that where there was a clear recollection of *hinotama*, a scientific-sounding theory might be used to explain the former Center belief, as in the following:

"The *hinotama* of the Center may have formed when phosphorous escapes from the dead body." (We had only heard this scientifically inclined rationalization three times in the Center, twice in 1943, and then both times referring to the Poston stories from the Riot period, so-called.)

Former purveyors of the omen of death version added to the "phosphorous" theory another, namely, that the Center *hinotama* could have existed there—but not outside—because *hinotama* are claimed to be seen in Japan in connection with the Bon Festival, a dancing, feasting period at harvest time not unlike a Feast-of-the-Dead commemoration. While it is certainly true that the Bon Festival took place yearly at Tule Lake, as in Japan, it took place—as a highly social rite—in some outside communities and in Hawaii in the post-war period without *hinotama* emphasis. In addition, Tule Lake's Bon season saw no particular increase in *hinotama* stories. In all Blocks and Wards of the Center where Bon took place each year, the social occasion mitigated against tensions. In 1945, Bon stopped, as frivolous, but *hinotama* stories independently grew in prevalence, and their results were visible near the crematory and orally substantiated. *Hinotama* grew in time of community distress and disappeared outside Center fences, as "scientific" rationalizations replaced them.

## II. FOX, CAT, AND BADGER LEGENDS

In Japan, the connection of Fox with Inari, rice-field and fertility god of popular Shinto, is complicated by a belief that Fox is a transformer, who, on occasion, will bewitch the unwary. At Tule Lake, only the latter notion received emphasis, first from Issei and Kibei because of the popular Shinto connection, but increasingly from Nisei for the reasons given below. Fox, and to a lesser extent, Dog and Badger, came to be mentioned in the light of entering humans in the spirit form. One Center resident who managed to keep a dog on Center premises was married to a part-Caucasian and evoked no criticism until late in 1944. Thereafter, however, rumors circulated that the Japanese wife became "possessed" with the spirit of the animal; they could take interchangeable form, talk to one another in a strange language, and the young wife could harm people when the beast's spirit invested her. While the actual subject was outspoken in dealings with Block residents, we could note no personal peculiarities other than a frank and forthright manner.

In 1945, a second case became famous. A woman, whose only differentiating features were connection with a minor religious cult (and whose son was famous in his Block for not intending to renounce citizenship), was linked

with "Fox possession." There were no foxes in camp or in the surrounding countryside, but rumor had it that she talked aloud, in her Apartment, with "some Fox." A neighbor, upset and unstrung in her own right, hysterically reported "loud tappings on the floors and walls next door, day and night," "screams and barking sounds," and human voices in "noisy arguments." The woman, a divorcée and attractive, was first called *kitsune-tsuki*, "possessed by foxes," by female gossips, but the story spread to Nisei circles and her daughter was called "immoral, like her mother" for no reason at all.

At Tule Lake, such stories went the rounds with increasing frequency in times of community tension. Apart from an actual increase in Inari-cult shrines in certain Apartments, there were, of course, no rice-fields or foxes in the Center. However, the Badger, linked in folk belief, along with Fox, Dog and Cat spirits as a transformer, came to light in the Center and furnished a focus of fear.<sup>10</sup> The actual badger was captured in Block 36 in February, 1945, and became the subject of much curiosity among the children until rumor had it that, like Fox, it had the power of bewitching people. Fox is never caught, only outmaneuvered, "but Badger is often caught in his attempts to bewitch people," was the Block version. Immediately word spread through the Center, not of the real event but of the imagined one. An Inari cult priest personally disposed of the creature and spoke words of prayer for the children. In the same week, there were many rumors of *inugami*, "dog-spirits," *nekogami*, "cat-spirits," and *inugami mochi*, "female witches."<sup>11</sup>

In one Block of Ward VII, where tensions over citizenship renunciation were marked, the hostility tended to fasten on two women:

"The cat can be a bewitcher though some say it just haunts those who mistreat it. That's why people try not to kill or drown them. But F1 is called *inugami mochi* now. She burned up a litter of kittens in the boiler room to get rid of them a few weeks back, and they say her apartment's still haunted by them. She was a witch before that though and no one will take over her apartment space since she left the Center. They say you'd go crazy in there; you'd get all scratched up at night. A couple of boys went in there for a nap and woke up with badly scratched faces. Y1 who went out with her owned the mother cat. Everyone's still asking what became of it."

Typical versions include:

"The Issei and Kibei claim that their friends or they were bewitched by foxes and led astray—into the mountains or open fields of Japan. They were often found days later in a weakened and not quite normal state, their clothes often smeared with filth. [Excrement is meant—M.K.O.] Legend will have it the foxes transformed themselves into beautiful girls or the likeness of old friends who lured the careless person. The victim could be fed what looked like food delicacies, but which in reality was more filth. Those who resisted it were said to have no bad effects, but those who ate it became slightly demented. Cats, too, could appear like beautiful girls, but be witches inside."

"The other day my father-in-law said why he believes all these stories going around the Center. Years ago, he and his older brother were working in the fields near an

<sup>10</sup> John F. Embree, *The Japanese Nation* (New York, 1945), p. 194.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

Inari shrine. His brother decided he wanted fried bean cake for lunch. He knew there was an offering of it on the Fox shrine, so he took it and forgot the whole thing. But that night someone came knocking on the door, asking for him. He gave the name of an old friend, but stood outside in the dark. The brother came out of his bath with only a towel on, and since it was summer went out in the doorway to talk. The family waited and waited and then, fearing he'd catch cold, brought his clothes out to where he had been standing. They looked all over out there, but couldn't find trace of either man. Then father-in-law asked the neighbors what to do and told them the bean-cake story. By now everyone was sure his brother was bewitched some way, and the young people organized a search party for the village. In the early morning they found him swimming back and forth in a pond a short way beyond the shrine, calling weakly for help. After they fished him out, he told how the visitor, who looked like his friend, led him out there and unceremoniously shoved him in. Whenever he tried to come out on the bank, all he heard was, "Return my food," while he was pushed back by something."

"After the Badger in Ward III, my grandmother told this one. She often visited late and had to pass a shrine when it was pitch black outside. One night, fearing to get lost, she clapped hands in front of the shrine and called out, "I ask for a guide." Right away a lantern appeared and bobbed ahead before here and there, lighting the path. When she reached home, she thanked the unseen guide and the lantern disappeared. Next night, though, it refused to go away and disappear until she thanked the Fox guide by name."

"I had never heard much of Fox, Badger or Cat until this camp. Back in Gilroy, where I was born, I had heard it only once and forgot it until here. Then it was a newcomer had arrived and the old people found he kept several foxes on his farm. They talked about it until it became a choice story among the young that he could set these foxes to bewitch anyone he didn't like. It started when he threatened an old-time resident, but it's not like that here where everyone knows such stories now."

Outside Tule Lake, a former resident of Block 36 sounded the general sentiment when he said, "Oh, those fox and badger stories back in the Center; well, people used to believe a lot of things in that Center they never believed before and haven't believed since!"

### III. PERCEPTIVE SWORDSMEN AND SORCERER'S APPRENTICES

A form of legendry, pre-Meiji in origin, had currency in the Segregation Center. These stories, too many to include in this brief account, concerned certain *ninjitsu* experts, capable of transmuting their bodies into any form or shape, or of vanishing, levitating the body into mid-air, or hypnotizing masses of people. The stories had, I suppose, little point at Tule Lake except as a point of pride in what Japanese, as people, could do. We therefore add below a few of the more typical endings to such stories. Suffice it to say that in the stories themselves, these remarkably powers were almost always gained through an arduous period of apprenticeship in a mountain fastness under tutelage of some awesome man of the mountain.

At least one very old Japanese movie shown in the Center featured a hero who learned transmutation and levitation. In such old movie versions, the individuals in question are usually persons mistreated in youth who return to wreak vengeance on the powerful lords (*daimyo*) who murdered their

families. Such stories, on the outside, so we were told, would hardly have passed for good Nisei entertainment; but in the Center they were extremely popular in the absence of other diversions, and because the revenge-seeking motif was congenial to the real flesh and blood, mistreated Nisei. Since such legendary figures are invariably gifted swordsmen, this led to much discussion among Nisei as to whether actual, famous swordsmen of history possessed a small measure of supernatural power. A favorite story in this group concerned the warrior who sensed his sword-bearer, who always walked behind his master, was plotting against his life. On one occasion, he disappeared to meditate upon the matter since he "knew" his life was in danger. Of course, the sword-bearer later confessed to idle designs upon his master's life. But in addition, stories of historical figures who could reach out and clutch arrows as they sped past, or who picked flies out of the air with chopsticks to sharpen eyes and quicken reflexes, became favorites.

Typical endings include:

"I guess they could actually do those things then, and it's a credit to our people."

"I've heard the present champion kendoist ("swordsmen"), can cleave through twelve Los Angeles phonebooks in one stroke. It makes one wonder if these supernatural events are just unusual events taking place under favorable circumstances."

"If it happened then, I wonder if it couldn't happen again." (This ending followed a frequent pattern of telling a magical account first, and then an elaborately embroidered account of some historical figure. When I asked, What could happen again?, the answer was, "Just about anything.")

Needless to say, the idea that "anything could happen" did not prevail outside the Center community. A staff member, aiding in the survey of these stories in 1946, wrote me: "People seem too busy, even in social life, to tell that kind of story. More than that, the Nisei had their fill of dreaming up things back in the Center and they call it tomfoolery outside."

#### IV. OMENS OF DEATH AND BAD LUCK

Aside from *hinotama*, Tule Lake was replete with folk beliefs concerning death and ill luck. While we were shown several amulets for good luck such as tiny wooden images to the gods of luck, carved in the Center (1945), and shrine inscriptions and medallions from the old country, the focus was usually upon bad fortune and it was impossible to assemble anything like a similar series of good luck omens.

*Baishakunin*, "marriage brokers," held one should not marry a person whose age varied four, seven or ten years from one's own. Seven was, in general, an unlucky number. Northeast was an unlucky direction. Whistling on the part of young people meant evil would befall their households. And if one swept the floor on New Year's day, or quarreled then, one swept out good fortune for the year or would quarrel the whole year through. A comb, picked up with teeth facing the body, meant bad luck. In these emphases, the temper of the Center was revealed constantly. Even more prevalent, however, was reference to death omens.



Typical omens of death included:

- If you point at a funeral line, you are next to die.
- If three persons are photoed together, the middle one is first to die.
- If you feel sorry for a sick animal, you will become ill; if, then it dies, you will die.
- If a crow cries in a strange, mournful cawing, someone has died nearby. (Dreams of hawks or snakes, on the other hand, bring good luck.)
- If you cut your nails at night, you will not be at your parent's deathbed.
- Don't sleep with head pointing north—the Buddhist burial position—or death will follow.
- If you kill a spider in the morning, you will kill the spirit of one who has entered its body while sleeping.
- If a cat jumps over a corpse laid out, it will make a vampire of it. (Consequently, said Issei, swords were once placed beside the dead to prevent this. Nisei were unaware of this notion.)
- A three-colored cat or black cat can bring good luck, but most cats do not.

#### V. PREGNANCY TABOOS AND BELIEFS

Prenatal influences were emphasized in a long series of admonitions heard increasingly in the Center between 1943 and 1946. A typical list ranged from the admonition to avoid quarrels (so the child would have an amiable spirit) to avoiding dark-fleshed fish (so the baby would not be sickly).

A typical list included:

- East is the wrong direction of travel for a pregnant woman. (This became a good-natured quip against relocation.)
- Eat *kobu* (kelp, seaweed) so the baby will have thick hair.
- Avoid eating shrimp for an easy birth and a strong child.
- Do not kill living creatures, especially lizards, or the child will be abnormal. (Variation: He who points at lizards will become insane.)
- Avoid eating sour foods, or the child's bones will be soft.
- Avoid highly seasoned foods, or the child's brain will be affected. (The post-partum version of this was that such foods spoiled the milk.)
- Avoid staring at fires, or the baby will have blotchy skin.
- Avoid looking at fires through windows, or the baby will have birthmarks. (The birthmark might occur wherever the mother placed her hand on her own body at the time. Analogically, a mother frightened by fire, who touched her face, might produce a birthmark on her infant on the same spot.)
- Avoid frightening experiences, or the baby will be nervous.
- Avoid dark pets, or the baby will be dark complexioned.

If pregnant women are lazy, we were told, their offspring will be high-strung and the birth pains will be all the greater. A favorite story in the Center was of rich families in Japan, well staffed with servants, where the master would see to it that beans were thrown on the floor so that in picking them up, one by one, the woman would get her exercise. On the other hand, the American folk belief that work involving circular arm movement might strangle the foetus with the umbilical cord, was commonly heard.

After the fifth month of pregnancy, the woman's abdomen is bound with a cloth for support. Inquiries at the Center hospital indicated this practice became more and more common. While also, the sex ratio of births was nor-

mal at Tule Lake, the claim was made increasingly that more girls are born in wartime and this, over time, presages the coming of peace. While peace was remote in 1944, the story went the rounds that more girls were being produced at the Center hospital and peace was certainly near.

In like manner, the typical cultural desire for boys, though not a wartime phenomenon, kept pace with the female birth rate rumor. A typical list of omens for boy-infants follows:

It will be a boy if:

The mother's eyes become fiercer and sharper.  
 The husband is lucky at gambling.  
 The foetus is active.  
 The heart beat is heard near the lower left side.  
 The abdomen protrudes markedly.  
 The abdomen protrudes sharply at an angle.  
 The mother eats coarse foods.  
 Conception took place early in the oestral cycle.

The more scientific notion that if the heart beat is slow, it will be a boy, was also known. As against such a list as the above, we were told that if the father was always in the sunshine, (not exactly possible in nine months of Tule Lake climate), the child might be a girl.

#### VI. BIRTH AND INFANCY BELIEFS

A Japanese woman is not supposed to cry out (much) at childbirth, for the event is viewed ambivalently as a time of mixed pride and shame. According to hospital medical staff, a Spartan attitude grew in the Segregation Center, atypical of Nisei girls outside or of women in the earlier Center scene. In addition, the custom of presenting gifts for the newborn child, with gift return from the family honored, increased in importance. From persons, whose provenience by family was such southern *kens* as Kumamoto, Fukuoka, Kagoshima, Yamaguchi or Wakayama, we learned that infant females were given *miso shiru*, soybean soup, to aid blood circulation, and that most infants were made to drink small amounts of *go-ko*, a bitter liquid, "to kill all poisons present in the child's system at birth." After the baby's leaving the hospital, its hair was sometimes shaven off in the belief that the new growth would be blacker. In some few families, the baby at this time was dressed in a red kimono and given a *mogusa* treatment (burning lightly on back of neck or other bodily parts: see below) to prevent fear or dizziness later in life. All of these customs increased in the Segregation Center and then virtually disappeared in the more normal environments of the post-war period.

#### VII. JAPANESE THERAPEUTICS

The psychological tensions of Center life were likewise expressed on the health front. Ordinarily, these took two forms: concern about services afforded in the Center hospital, and recourse to Japanese therapeutics of a non-medical nature. Before the Segregation Center was established and for a few months thereafter, community sentiments about health centered in half-rational, half-nativistic worries about health administration and hospital

organization. A word of caution is necessary here, for both administration and hospital organization were inadequate to the task, as we reported at the time. But under Segregation policy, time was on the side of nativistic-magical techniques which substituted Japanese therapeutics for such medical practices as the hospital afforded. The period, 1945-1946, which marked the culmination of Messianic movements in the Center generally, saw also the greatest development of such folk practices.

The use of "folk practices" as a term in this connection may require some explanation. Until 1853, when Japan slowly and timidly opened her doors to the west, the only types of medicine practiced were the *Chiryō*, "Therapeutics," of the time, and *Kokan igaku*, "Medicine of Herbs." Both were practices said to have come from India and China. Such methods still flourish in rural Japan and even elsewhere where medical facilities are not wholly adequate, borrowing, on the urban fringe, somewhat from modern medical knowledge. Indeed, at one time the government conducted research on "primitive *Chiryō*," claiming that Far Eastern medical thought laid emphasis on cure from within, building resistance through diet, herbs and *Chiryō* treatments. (It was further claimed that these were generally more sparing of life and limb at the dawn of modern medicine than early Western surgery and bleeding tactics.) *Chiryō* which is the Japanese word for any kind of medical art was, therefore, a waning technique or set of techniques in America, the revival of which at Tule in 1945-1946 falls within the movement from perpetuative nativism to revivalistic-magical nativism.

This *Chiryō*, then, which excludes modern medical practices, was claimed, by Tuleans, to have overcome the earlier ignorance of organic structure and function. Early *Chiryō* utilized nostrums and cures and, to some extent, folk or experientially derived cures. While modern *Chiryō*ists claimed to know some physiology, muscle structure, nerve anatomy and blood circulation, they utilized little of the complementary set of nostrums, but instead dogmatized nerve-muscle and muscle-organ connections. By aiding the functioning of blood circulation, or stimulating nerves or muscles involved, they stated they helped the affected organs indirectly.

The first immigrant introducers of *Chiryō* lost ground to the efficiency and efficacy of Western medicine and either gave way to doctors and chiropractors or continued in large, urban centers with evening "practices" as a sideline. Until the methods were revived at Tule Lake in 1944, there had been little *Chiryō* except for the birth or *mogusa* (heat treatment) for infants in the Japanese community. Undoubtedly, this revival was due to two factors: the strain on hospital facilities and the growth of interest in things specifically Japanese.

By 1946, in the Center, *Chiryō* of these types (*Anma*, *Mogusa* and *Hari*) were viewed as a source of relief for a long list of ill-defined ailments such as neuralgia, lumbago, sore arms, aching shoulders, poor health and old age. We counted, in 1945, no less than 75 thriving *Chiryō*ists as against less than a dozen doctors. Of these, about 50 were *Anma* specialists, 20 *Kiyu* or *Mogusa*, and 5 *Hari* practitioners. Only four, of the 50 *Anma* specialists, were "certified," i.e., graduates of *Anma*, or massage, schools in Japan. We

found nine who claimed to be Center understudies of these specialists. The other thirty-five or so were catch as catch can experts who were meeting a growing demand in the Center for fairly obvious economic reasons.

Of *Kiyu* or *Mogusa* practitioners, again only a fourth were certified, about fifteen being self-styled students, but practicing in the meantime. (*Kiyu* is more complicated and exacting than *Anma*, and as seen below, mistreatment can easily lead to complications.)

Allegations that one *Hari* practitioner was not certified were never checked because of the professional jealousies rampant in the small group. (Again, though mistreatment could cause gangrene, paralysis, and other complications, the *Hari* doctors had some trade, and surprisingly, even Nisei patients.)

*Anma Treatments:* Practitioners said the technique originated in India, moved to China, and was brought to Japan by a Buddhist priest of the 14th Century. As in Tule, it was the most common *Chiryō* of rural Japan, usually practiced by blind persons there, though only one Tule Lake "doctor" was blind.

A cross between chiropractic and massage, *Anma*, in the words of one woman practitioner "cures muscle strain, bad circulation, fatigue and organ troubles." One massaged the ailing part "to stimulate blood" and hence "muscles and nerves." Even Nisei proclaimed that a good *Anma* specialist could diagnose by going over the patient's body with his hands.

*Kiyu or Mogusa Treatment:* *Kiyu* was said to have reached Japan from China. Because of its greater complication and the belief certified training was desirable, there were fewer practitioners. Again, the stimulation of blood circulation figured in descriptions, affecting nerve centers, ligaments, muscles and finally latent organs. Some, possibly as a defensive rationalization, added that the heat could kill bacteria through the *Mogusa*. A Nisei said, "The body temperature around the *Mogusa* becomes so great that germs can't stand it, like in the fever treatment of syphilis." Though not a polite topic for Japanese conversation, a few said *Mogusa* cures tuberculosis.

In administering *Kiyu*, the dried *Mogusa* plant is generally used, although we noted thistle being substituted at Tule. The moss-like material is rolled into tiny balls one-sixteenth to one-quarter of an inch in diameter. A vital spot is associated with every conceivable type of ailment and *Mogusa* burned on the "vital spot." For example, for eye trouble, the vital spot is the elbow; though we did not collect a full catalog of vital spots, the back of the neck was specified for several kinds of stomach trouble, chest for kidneys, and so on. The rolled *Mogusa* is lighted like a punk, leaving scars, on occasion, long after. Nerves and blood vessels in the vital spot form a chain reaction to those in the affected part.

While *Mogusa* likewise has a household use—the disciplining of small children—this is not recommended for the untutored since burning certain bodily parts on certain days is said to result in death. However, the *Mogusa* treatment of newly born infants is never related to tabooed days.

*Hari Treatment:* *Hari*, a form of acupuncture or needle treatment is said to have originated in Japan. Center residents said also it required the most skill of the three *Chiryō* methods. A gold or silver needle is used: these range



from two to six inches in length and vary from thicknesses of wire to those of fine hair. The needles are used either to prick the skin or probe deeply for nerve centers in an attempt to stimulate nerves, blood vessels or muscles. To the range of illnesses usually listed in *Chiryo*, *Hari* adds arthritis, kidney and liver trouble, along with toothaches and bruises. In treating the latter, it is claimed the needle "disperses" the bad blood and the bruise disappears—to a certain extent. In Japan, *Hari* is sometimes used in cases of heart trouble when all medical aid has failed. In Tule, we did not hear of this outside the *Hari* practitioners' circle, and it could be noted that of the three types of treatment, Nisei feared only the *Hari*, few submitting to it. About twenty per cent of Issei had "tried" such treatment, but most took *Anma* treatments and next in order, *Kiyu*.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

There would be little point in reciting this catalog of folk beliefs and practices, selected under seven headings from our Tule Lake files and connected here with cultural revivalism, had there been no way of checking the assumption that their episodic growth represented a species of nativistic movement. However, every belief and practice here recorded has been checked, since Center dissolution, with original informants. While the "ball of fire" legend was recast into the scientific sounding rationalizations noted above, even the girl in Block 32 could not recall seeing it and most Postonites had forgotten their troubles in Camp 2. In Bon festivals in Hawaii and on the mainland, no such occurrences were mentioned for the post-war period. And for informants on fox legendry, no new data could be adduced for the three years since Center closure. The Nisei who told the story of the present champion swordsman, and those who had discussed levitation, arrow-catchers and supernaturalistic *samurai* all scoffed at the accounts and showed little interest in the ideas. Life crisis beliefs and bad omens, when checked with the same persons, found little support, except here and there the notions of determining the male foetus, the custom of *miso shiru* for infant girls, and one or two of the food beliefs. *Chiryo* practitioners, outside camp surroundings, were in a variety of other callings and in thirty-odd cases checked found not the slightest call for their talents. And so it went. Conditions of life had changed and with them culturally rooted beliefs. They had served their purpose and they died a natural death.

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